

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NIAMEY 03811 280929Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02

SS-15 ICA-11 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 OES-09 AGRE-00

EB-08 COME-00 IO-13 INT-05 SMS-01 PC-01 /129 W

-----124361 281216Z /44

R 280750Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1236

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 3811

E.O. 11652: AGDS 1, 2

TAGS: PING, PDEV, NG

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE -- U.S.
NIGER BI-LATERAL RELATIONS

REF: NIAMEY 3229

1. DURING AUGUST 25 MEETING, AMBASSADOR JAMES AND PRESIDENT KOUNTCHE REVIEWED U.S. /NIGER BILATERAL RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY U.S. ASSISTANCE TO NIGER. KOUNTCHE OPENING THE CONVERSATION, SAID HE WAS VERY PLEASED WITH THE WAY U.S. ASSISTANCE WAS WORKING OUT IN NIGER. HE PARTICULARLY APPRECIATED THE STYLE WE HAD ADOPTED IN RECENT YEARS WORKING VERY CLOSELY WITH GON IN FORMULATING PROJECTS. PRIOR TO THAT TIME U.S. AID HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT DIFUSE IN ITS ACTION BUT WAS NOW MUCH BETTER FOCUSED ON NIGER'S PRIORITY NEEDS.

2. KOUNTCHE AGAIN REMARKED THAT NIGER HAD BEEN VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE U.S. THIS YEAR THE U.S. WAS THE ONLY COUNTRY PROVIDING AN IMPORTANT QUANTITY OF FOOD
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PAGE 02 NIAMEY 03811 280929Z

ASSISTANCE WHICH WAS GREATLY APPRECIATED. KOUNTCHE SAID HE EXPECTED THAT BEFORE THE AMBASSADOR RETURNED IN LATE OCTOBER THAT THEY WOULD HAVE COMPLETED THE HARVEST--IF THE RAINS CONTINUED THROUGH MID SEPTEMBER HE EXPECTED A GOOD HARVEST. HE NOTED THERE ARE SOME PROBLEMS ESPECIALLY WITH GRASSHOPPERS BUT THERE ARE NOT YET SERIOUS. THE GON WAS WATCHING THE SITUATION CAREFULLY, HOWEVER. HE IMPLIED THAT IF THE HARVEST WAS NOT GOOD, NIGER

WOULD COME TO THE U.S. FOR ADDITIONAL HELP.

3. TURNING TO POLITICAL PROBLEMS , KOUNTCHE SUGGESTED THAT DURING HIS CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON, THE AMBASSADOR PASS ALONG HIS VIEW THAT THE U.S. SHOULD TAKE A GREATER INTEREST IN AFRICA, ESPECIALLY FRANCOPHONE AFRICA. THE FRANCOPHONE STATES SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS SPECIAL FRENCH PRESERVE. FRANCE DID NOT HAVE THE MEANS TO HELP THEM BY ITSELF, EVEN IN THE AREA OF DEVELOPMENT. THE U.S. SHOULD DEVISE A NEW STRATEGY TO PROVIDE NECESSARY HELP TO FRANCOPHONE STATES, WHOSE POPULATION STILL FACED CRITICAL PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION, HEALTH AND AGRICULTURE.

4. KOUNTCHE SAID THAT WITHOUT HELP FROM THE UNITED STATES, FRANCOPHONE AFRICANA WOULD NOT DO ALL THEY WANTED TO. HE REMARKED THAT QADDAFI WAS NOT A SUPERIOR INDIVIDUAL, BUT HE WAS ABLE TO DO THINGS WHICH THE FRANCOPHONES COULD NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE HE HAD FINANCIAL RESOURCES AT HIS DISPOSAL.

5. KOUNTCHE MADE A POINT OF REFERRING TO THE RECENT U.S. VISIT OF MINISTER OF MINES AND NOTED THAT MINISTER MOUNKEILA AROUNA HAD TRAVELLED DIRECTLY TO U.S. WITHOUT PASSING THROUGH PARIS. THIS , HE SAID, SHOULD SHOW THAT NIGER WAS NOT A CAPTIVE OF FRANCE.

6. KOUNTCHE RETURNED TO THE IDEA THAT GREATER U.S. ACTION IN AFRICA WOULD BE NECESSARY. HE SAID THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WAS A MAN OF GOOD WILL BUT AFRICAN LEADERS ARE CONCERNED AT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 NIAMEY 03811 280929Z

THE IMPACT OF CONGRESSIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON HIS ABILITY TO ACT. THE SOVIETS, HE ASSERTED, COULD MAKE SUBSTANTIAL GAINS IN AFRICA BEFORE THE CONGRESS MIGHT ALLOW CARTER TO REACT. LATER, WHILE DISCUSSING THE SITUATION IN THE WESTERN SAHARA, KOUNTCHE NOTED THAT FRANCE HAD INTERVENED ON THE SIDE OF MOROCCO ANXE MAURITANIA. HE SUGGESTED THAT U.S. SHOULD ALSO BE INVOLVED, BUT DIPLOMATICALLY. THE U.S. HAS GOOD RELATIONS, KOUNTCHE NOTED, WITH BOTH MOROCCO AND ALGERIA, AND WOULD BE EXCELLENT MEDIATOR.

6. ON THE WHOLE, HOWEVER, KOUNTCHE PRONOUNCED HIMSELF WELL SATISFIED WITH U.S. - NIGERIEN RELATIONS. HE CITED FOR SPECIAL PRAISE BOTH AID AND THE PEACE CORPS.

7. COMMENT: THESE ARE LARGELY THEMES WHICH KOUNTCHE WAS SOUNDED BEFORE. HOWEVER , HIS FLAT STATEMENT THAT FRANCOPHONE AFRICA NEEDED MORE HELP FROM THE U.S. AND SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A SPECIAL FRENCH PRESERVE (CHASSE-GARDEE) IS THE FIRST TIME HE HAS EXPRESSED HIMSELF IN THESE TERMS SO DIRECTLY. IN THIS CONTEXT IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT HE POINTED TO MOUNKEILA'S TRAVEL TO U.S. VIA DAKAR INSTEAD OF PARIS AS EVIDENCE OF NIGERIEN INDEPENDENCE OF FRANCE. THIS TENDS TO CONFIRM OUR CONCLUSION (SEE REFTTEL) THAT THE TRIP AND ITINERARY WERE VIEWED BY GON AS A DECLARATION OF

TO BE READ BY U.S. AND FRANCE. THE CHIEF OF STATE FEELS THAT U.S.
RELATIONS WITH FRANCOPHONE AFRICA HAVE BEEN INHIBITED BY U.S.
RELUCTANCE TO TAMPER WITH THE SANCTITY OF THE COLONIAL CONNECTION.
THE CONNECTION HAS WORN THIN AND U.S. ATTITUDES AND POLICIES
SHOULD BE REVISED ACCORDINGLY. HIS OVERALL CONCERN ABOUT WHAT
HE SEES AS A DETERIORATING SITUATION IN AFRICA (SEE SEPTTEL)
NO DOUBT UNDERLIES HIS APPEAL TO U.S. FOR GREATER ASSISTANCE TO
FRANCOPHONE STATES.JAMES

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